

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner amend the present application by entering the amendments set forth above in the Listing of Claims. As explained below, the amended claims are neither anticipated by, nor made obvious in light of, the asserted prior art.

35 U.S.C. § 102 and § 103 Rejections

Claims 1-3, 5, 21, 23, and 34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,766,076 to Pease et al. (“Pease”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,682,421 to Rowe et al. (“Rowe”) and the article “What are relational databases?”

The Pease reference is directed to “a hierarchically-organized progressive gaming system in which the central system need not directly award a prize to a player at an individual gaming device or terminal.” Pease at 1:65–2:1. The Office action equates the central computer system 106 in Pease to the claimed “central authority,” and equates the database maintained by gateway processor 138 in Pease to the claimed “second database.” The Office action then points to the teachings of Rowe in support of the assertion that it would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art to add ticket validation capabilities to the system of Pease, and points to the article “What are relational databases?” in support of the assertion that it would have been obvious to modify the combination of Pease and Rowe to utilize relational databases.

In response to the Office action, Applicants have amended the only two pending independent claims (claims 1 and 21). As described below, no new matter has been added by way of any of the amendments. Applicants respectfully submit that the remaining, amended claims are patentably distinct from the combination of the cited references.

Independent claim 1, as amended, requires a central authority and a plurality of gaming machines, wherein the gaming machines are configured to receive balance data and input ticket data, and to generate meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data. Claim 1 also requires a first relational database located in the central authority, a network, and a data processing unit spaced apart from the first relational database. The data processing unit comprises a second relational database and a programmed hardware. The first relational database comprises a meter table, a jackpot table, a ticket table, a player table and a balance table, and the second relational database comprises a local meter table, a local jackpot table, a local ticket table, a local player table and a local balance table.

The programmed hardware of claim 1 is configured to provide a poller function and a data mover function. The poller function is configured to poll each of the gaming machines to obtain meter data, jackpot data, output ticket data and player data generated by the gaming machines over the network, and is further arranged to format the data in an auditable format before storing the formatted data in a corresponding local meter table, local jackpot table, local ticket table, and local player table. The data mover function is configured to periodically transmit at least a portion of the formatted meter data, formatted jackpot data, formatted output ticket data and formatted player data from the second relational database to the first relational database over the network, whereby the periodically transmitted meter data is stored in the meter table, the periodically transmitted jackpot data is stored in the jackpot table, the periodically transmitted output ticket data is stored in the ticket table, and the periodically transmitted player data is stored in the player table. The data mover function is further configured to periodically retrieve input ticket data and balance data from the first relational database over the network independently of a request by any of the gaming machines, whereby the periodically retrieved

input ticket data is stored in the local ticket table and the periodically retrieved balance data is stored in the local balance table. The poller function is further configured to transmit at least a portion of the periodically obtained input ticket data and the periodically obtained balance data from the second relational database to the gaming machines over the network when said portion is required by the gaming machines. An accounting module is arranged to evaluate the formatted and periodically stored data in at least one of the tables of the first relational database to automatically generate a gaming activity audit report for the plurality of gaming machines.

Claim 1 has been amended in several ways to further distinguish the cited references in the Office action. First, the poller function is “further arranged to format the data in an auditable format before storing the formatted data in a corresponding” local jackpot table, local meter table, local ticket table, and local player table. This functionality is disclosed at least in paragraphs 46 and 63 of the originally filed specification.

Second, the data mover function is further configured to periodically retrieve input ticket data and balance data from the first relational database over the network “independently of a request by any of the gaming machines.” This feature is disclosed at least in paragraphs 51 and 59-60 of the originally filed specification, which show that although data is moved from the local database to the gaming machines based on whether the gaming machines “require” the data, data is moved from the central authority database to the local database “on a regular time interval,” or “periodically” (i.e., independent of gaming machine requirements).

Third, an “accounting module” is “arranged to evaluate the formatted and periodically transmitted data stored in at least one of the tables of the first relational database to automatically generate a gaming activity audit report for the plurality of gaming machines.” The accounting

module and its functionality are disclosed in at least paragraphs 46 and 63 of the originally filed specification.

The amendments to claim 21 and dependent claim 34 are very similar to the amendments to claim 1, and are supported by the originally filed specification in the same manner as claim 1.

None of the additional limitations are taught or suggested by the cited references. While the Pease reference includes a very brief disclosure stating that the central system can log winners and potential winners in an auditable manner (see 9:18-9:22 and 9:27-34), it contains no teaching or suggestion of formatting the gaming activity data in an auditable format prior to storing in the local (i.e., "second") relational database, which has the specific advantages outlined in paragraphs 46 and 63 of the presently filed specification. Moreover, there is no disclosure in Pease as to how a gaming activity report could be automatically generated based on the stored formatted data. The remaining cited references fail to disclose auditing capability altogether.

Furthermore, none of the cited references discloses a data mover function that periodically retrieves and locally stores (i.e., in the local database) input ticket data and balance data from the remote relational database independent of a request by any of the gaming machines. By doing so, the system of the present invention is able to provide continuous game play on the gaming machines even if the central authority is temporarily disabled (see, for example, paragraphs 51-59 of the presently filed specification, which outline this feature in more detail). By contrast, the cited references only disclose such data being retrieved on request by one of the gaming machines. For example, Pease discloses that account data is communicated to a gaming machine in response to a new player card being inserted into a card slot of the gaming machine. *See* Pease at 3:53-4:9. No cited reference contains any teaching or suggestion that

such data is periodically retrieved and updated, independently of a request by a gaming machine, to allow for continuous game play in the event that the network should fail.

Accordingly, the asserted prior art does not render independent claims 1 or 21 obvious. Claims 2-3, 5, 23 and 34 depend from claim 1 or 21, and are thus allowable over the prior art of record at least for the same reasons that claims 1 or 21 are allowable.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims, i.e. claims 1-3, 5, 21, 23 and 34. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any questions or if Applicants can be of any assistance, the Examiner is invited and encouraged to contact Applicants at the number below.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any necessary fees or credit any overpayment to the Deposit Account of McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Account No. 13-0017.

Respectfully submitted,
McAndrews, Held & Malloy, Ltd.

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